

## Death of Joseph Svacina

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arrayed in long and sweeping riding habits, with feathers and ribbons to match," as the contemporary reports described them, could not have indulged in "bareback riding," or in riding astride, without at least partially disrobing. Divided skirts were not in fashion. They rode modestly on sidesaddles as they were accustomed to ride.

Yours truly,

C. J. FULTON.

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### DEATH OF JOSEPH SVACINA

(From the *Catholic Forester* for July, 1935.)

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Honest, quiet, unassuming Joseph Svacina, the trusted friend of the Indians, passed away at his home in Tama, Iowa, June 18, 1935, bringing to a close a career replete with incidents of human interest and the practice of the Christian virtues. He leaves to mourn him a loving wife, daughter and three sons who are a credit to his name.

In the discharge of his duties as financial secretary of St. Patrick's Court 1372 for the past eight years he was efficient and dependable and established a high standard of morale in the office.

Seldom in modern times has any one become so interested in the welfare of the Indian as did our late Brother Svacina. Next to his own kin, no one shared his great love of humanity, his never failing appraisal of human character, as did the four hundred men, women and children residing on the Tama Indian Reservation. He enjoyed their confidence to the utmost; they came to him for counsel and advice and he helped them financially by organizing their annual Pow-wow and placing it upon a substantial and paying basis. He looked upon them as so many forgotten children who were in need of the solace of companionship in a world that contrasts strikingly to the ancient traditions of their race.

He was the oldest business man in the town of Tama, having been established there in the harness and leather business for more than forty-two years. His funeral was one of the largest ever held in the town. A section of the church was reserved for the Indians and it was well filled; even some papooses were "toted" by squaw mothers who came to pay a last tribute to the

"white brother" who had been admitted many years ago as a member of the Mesquakie tribe under the name of "Wa be te ke wa" [Wa bi ke ti wa], meaning the "White Eagle." He was the one outstanding friend they had among the white men. He it was whom they trusted implicitly and their confidence was never betrayed. He guided them in their public undertakings, advised them on tribal and individual problems, shared their joys and sorrows.

Following the solemn high Requiem Funeral Mass, the Rev. Father A. P. Meyers, pastor of Tama, paid fitting tribute to the life of Joseph Svacina, using as his text the incident of the Good Samaritan. Father Meyers, also a member of St. Patrick's Court, said in substance "If every white man would look upon these 'children of the Forest' as did our dear departed friend there would be no page in American history that would bring the blush of shame to our cheek."

Brother Joseph Svacina's delineation and appraisal of the Indian character was beyond the comprehension of the average person. Being a lover of Indian history and a student of Indian affairs, he acquired a large and valuable collection of Indian handiwork, relics and specimens. He loved these treasures and only rarely was it possible to induce him to part with any of them. Mr. Harlan, in charge of the Historical Department at the State Capitol, Des Moines, was in attendance at the funeral as representative of the State of Iowa.

Joseph Svacina will be missed as a devout member of St. Patrick's church, as an efficient officer of St. Patrick's Court 1372 and as one of the valuable citizens of his community. But next to his loving wife and family no one will miss him more than the little, fast dwindling group of Mesquakie Indians. His name will be revered in their councils for many moons and the legend of his noble and generous deeds to the Red Man will be conveyed from generation to generation in tribal traditions.

Wa be te ke wa [Wa bi ke ti wa] is dead.

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